



COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Airports

Q1. What is the delay phase and how long will it last?

With the announcement by the Prime Minister on 12th March 2020 of the delay phase, all previous PHE Port Health COVID-19 protocols were revoked via a DfT NOTAM on Friday 13 March 2020. The length of duration of this phase is unclear and current advice would suggest that the measures will be in place for some months.

The delay phase has been initiated as there is now community transmission of the virus in the UK. i.e. transmission not directly related to travel; this has made interventions in ports of less relative importance and with the shift to the delay phase and commensurate policy changes, the PHE Port Health approach has been changed from monitoring to one of public information.

Q2. Will temperature exit screening be introduced at ports?

The UK government is not endorsing exit screening currently. This is under constant review and if there is a change in direction, all ports will be notified accordingly.

Q3. What do we do with symptomatic passengers who are in transit or try to board a flight and the airline contacts us for advice?

If anyone has the relevant [symptoms](#), (please check live guidance for specific symptoms) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-initial-investigation-of-possible-cases/investigation-and-initial-clinical-management-of-possible-cases-of-wuhan-novel-coronavirus-wn-cov-infection> they should immediately self-isolate as per our [stay at home guidance](#). If a passenger has nowhere to self-isolate, then they should contact their embassy for support. If assistance is required, please contact the Health Control Unit on 020 8745 7209 heathrow.hcu@phe.gov.uk

Q4. Border Force can't change gloves every time as written in the guidance for staff in the transport sector on COVID-19. What can be done?

Interim guidance pending official guidance change

The reality is that gloves, where worn, will have to be used for protracted periods and only changed episodically. It will not be feasible to try and use hand washing or hand-gel with them (not least because of the scarcity of hand gel). Single use gloves should not be washed or cleaned with hand sanitiser – the damages the integrity of the gloves. It is important to

remind staff not to touch their faces with the gloves on and to remove them, and washing their hands immediately, before any personal functions, like eating, visiting the bathroom or blowing their nose. Airport workers should carefully remove gloves to avoid self-contamination

- Q5. What do we do about cleaning areas where staff with suspected/confirmed cases have worked? How long does the virus last on surfaces? What type of protective clothing should we use in the workplace?**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19#cleaning-offices-and-public-spaces-where-there-are-suspected-or-confirmed-cases-of-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

- Q6. What does self-isolation mean? And what does this mean for other members of families?**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus#when-you-return-to-the-uk-protect-yourself-and-others>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Further information on self-quarantine awaited, however further information on the measures on international travel can be found in the **Our plan to rebuild: The UK government's COVID-19 recovery strategy – International Travel**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

- Q7. How do we deal with acute illness (with/without COVID-19) at an airport?**

Airports should follow local pathways and contact their local ambulance service if a passenger is seriously unwell. Where possible, inform local ambulance service in advance if the unwell passenger is displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

- Q8. What is the COVID-19 guidance on social distancing and what this means for vulnerable adults?**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

- Q9. What happens if a passenger self declares in-flight? What happens if a passenger self declares at an airport (Outbound)?**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>

Q10. We are rapidly running out of hand sanitiser and are struggling to obtain new stocks; please can we have some support with this?

These concerns are being heard across government and a supply chain group has been set up led by the Cabinet Office who are conducting an exercise to look at PPE and hand sanitiser demands. Please continue with procuring hand sanitiser, even if there is a long lead time to ensure preparedness further down the line.

Leeds Bradford Airport kindly supplied a contact that has managed to secure large stocks of hand sanitiser:

SMI group (Surrey, UK) has managed to secure large stocks of the large stock instant hand sanitiser (236ml £4.99 - minimum order 24 bottles) [donovan.prisgrove@smigroup.com]

Q11. Can you provide guidance on handling HUM's for air transportation during the COVID-19 epidemic?

The IATA guidance for transport of COVID material:

<https://www.iata.org/contentassets/8aa8928c553042bf99a5014d8ac25c8f/guidance-document-transport-of-covid-19-human-remains.pdf>

PHE guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>

EU guidance: (with section on cleaning as well)

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/COVID-19-safe-handling-of-bodies-or-persons-dying-from-COVID19.pdf>

Specific risks related to the handling bodies of deceased persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

*There is no evidence so far of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 through the handling of bodies of deceased persons. The potential risk of transmission related to the handling of bodies of deceased persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is considered low and can be related to: • direct contact with human remains or bodily fluids where the virus is present • direct contact with contaminated fomites. As viable SARS-CoV-2 may persist on surfaces for days [7], there is the possibility that the virus also persists on deceased bodies. Therefore, unnecessary contact with bodies should be minimised by those not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Those in direct contact with deceased cases of COVID-19 (both suspected or confirmed) should be protected from exposure to infected bodily fluids, contaminated objects, or other contaminated environmental surfaces through wearing of appropriate PPE. **For PPE requirements and further details, please refer to this guidance:***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>

Q12. What is the COVID-19 testing prioritisation process?

All testing prioritisation requests should be forwarded to heathrow.hcu@phe.gov.uk

Q13. What social distancing measures have been implemented at airports?

Social distancing security measures implemented at Heathrow Airport

- Opened additional staff search areas where possible
- Altered our security lane opening plan to leave space between lanes where possible
- Belts and shoes removal to decrease the number of physical body searches required
- Changed how we “stack” passengers waiting to go into the body scanners to only 1 waiting at a time – This was multiple people waiting previously
- Floor markings placed down at bag search areas to ensure people maintain a safe distance whilst their bag is being searched
- Changed colleague parking to reduce number of people on staff busses
- Stopped group briefings and have moved to digital / small group with spacing
- All Security Officers issued individual hand sanitisers and regular cleaning of hands promoted
- Body searches – Heathrow Head of Security has been working very closely with the DfT and CAA on this. We have done everything we can to reduce the amount of people who are subjected to body search

Q14. The Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (RCOG) are advising that pregnant women who are up to 28 weeks should be given the choice of whether they work in direct patient-facing roles. Does this apply to airport passenger facing roles (e.g. security officers)?

The guidelines from RCOG spell out the advice.

Please see below the relevant question and will recommend that you visit the weblink (below) before giving advice to your staff in liaison with your occupational health department.

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virus-infection-and-pregnancy/>

Can I still go to work? What if I work in a public-facing role?

Following the Chief Medical Officer’s advice on 16 March 2020 that all pregnant women are classed as a precaution in a vulnerable group, we understand that it must be an anxious time if you are pregnant and you work in a public-facing role.

Pregnant women who can work from home should do so. If you can’t work from home, but your work in a public-facing role can be modified appropriately to minimise your exposure, this should be considered and discussed with your occupational health team or employer.

More detailed occupational health advice for pregnant women, including those who cannot work from home was published on 21 March 2020, and updated on 26 March. It recommends that if you are in your first or second trimester (less than 28 weeks’ pregnant), with no underlying health conditions, you should practice [social distancing](#) but can choose to continue to work in a public-facing role, provided the necessary precautions are taken - these include the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and risk assessment.

If you are in your third trimester (more than 28 weeks' pregnant) or have an underlying health condition – such as heart or lung disease – you should work from home where possible, avoid contact with anyone with symptoms of coronavirus, and significantly reduce unnecessary social contact. Read the government guidance on [social distancing](#).

The [guidance](#) was updated again on 21 April (Version 3) in response to feedback from individuals and charities supporting pregnant women, to clarify that responsibility for risk assessment in the workplace lies with the employer. The guidance clearly places the emphasis on employers undertaking a risk assessment and involving occupational health, to determine whether women who are under 28 weeks' pregnant can continue working in public-facing roles. Pregnant women can only continue working where the risk assessment supports this. The evidence underpinning this guidance and the fundamentals agreed with the UK Chief Medical Officers remains unchanged.

Q15. Does the COVID-19 virus spread by Air ducts/Aircon/HVAC?

This is a very general question for which there is currently insufficient evidence to provide a definitive answer.

Like other coronaviruses, spread of COVID-19 is likely to occur primarily through contact with respiratory secretions produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.

Most respiratory secretions form droplet particles, which are pulled to the ground by gravity. These can be spread directly to other persons who are nearby, or onto surfaces. Under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 72 hours.

If respiratory droplets are aerosolised in small particles there is the possibility for airborne transfer over larger distances. Studies of other coronaviruses indicate that these viruses have the potential to be transmitted through the airborne route. However, for most individuals with COVID-19 aerosolization of virus particles is likely to be limited under normal circumstances. Once in the environment virus survival, and therefore transmissibility, is highly dependent on temperature, humidity, exposure to sunlight and the nature of any surface that the virus lands on.

For the current outbreak there is currently insufficient evidence to indicate transmission of viable virus through air vent and air conditioning systems.

Q16. Can you please confirm that the NOTAM issued 10/5/2020 that states 'Carriers are required to complete a GAD for all flights coming into the UK' does NOT apply in the following circumstances:

- 1) UK domestic flights (arrival and departure airports in the UK, IOM or Channel Islands)**
- 2) Non-commercial flights (i.e. positioning or maintenance flights with operating crews only on board), irrespective of state the flight departs from**

We do not expect a GAD to be completed for UK domestic flights, flights from the Common Travel Area and non-commercial flights, however expect that if someone became ill on-board on a flight in these categories you would submit a GAD by exception

Q17. I work at an airport setting. Should I wear face covering/masks?

Government is now advising (Our plan to rebuild: UK Govt COVID-19 strategy, May 2020), that, “people should aim to wear a face-covering in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not always possible, and they come in contact with others that they do not normally meet”. Face-coverings are not intended to help the wearer, but to protect against inadvertent transmission of the disease to others if you have it asymptotically. Homemade cloth face-coverings can help reduce the risk of transmission in some circumstances. A face covering is not the same as a facemask such as the surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment by healthcare and other workers. These supplies must continue to be reserved for those who need them health and clinical care settings.

If workers choose to use face coverings, you should support them in using face coverings safely.

For example:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you’ve touched it.
- Continue to wash your hands regularly.
- Change and wash your face covering daily. If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer’s instructions. If it’s not washable, dispose of it in your usual waste.
- **Practise social distancing wherever possible.**

Following guidance provide further details for employers and employees:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home> and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>. and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

Following guidance will help organisations, agencies and others (such as self-employed transport providers) understand how to provide safer workplaces and services for themselves, their workers and passengers across all modes of private and public transport. It outlines measures to assess and address the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the transport sector across England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>

Workplaces should follow guidance published by BEIS on safe workplaces and follow the legal obligations they have under Health and Safety legislation to protect their staff at work.

Additionally, workplaces may have specific guidance for protective equipment. The information on face coverings does not replace those workplace recommendations. Workers are advised to follow the specific guidance for their place of work.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Q18. Can you please provide further clarification on the waste disposal of PPE (blue nitrile gloves and surgical type face masks)?

Please check your organisation's health and safety policies. In general, any face coverings and gloves discarded by healthy passengers and staff within the terminal can be disposed of in normal general waste bins with no additional measures. Existing terminal bins and bins in brew rooms can, therefore, be used. Recycling is not appropriate.

Enhanced disposal measures are only required for disposable PPE worn by a person with or suspected of having COVID-19 and people in contact with them. It is anticipated that within the airport this would be within isolation rooms or other areas in which escalation processes are put in place, or if a passenger or staff member becomes ill and is attended by a paramedic. For small volumes generated in this way, this is probably easiest managed through the existing clinical waste disposal process, although an alternative is to double bag and store for 72 hours prior to disposal in general waste.

Q19. Is testing available now for airport staff?

The situation with testing is changing progressively as the capability is ramped up. At present, in England, key workers are now eligible for testing, but tests need to be booked and access to testing sites is being improved at a rapid pace. Different arrangements may apply elsewhere in the UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested#who-can-be-tested>

Key workers who may be tested in the transport sector include

- those who keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the coronavirus response
- those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass

Q20. What is the COVID-19 testing process?

Details on how test is done, and a very helpful video is now available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested#the-testing-process>